Meeting of Tobacco Board

1812. SHRI V. HANUMANTHA RAO: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether a formal and notified meeting of the Tobacco Board was held in July, 1994 in Guntur;

(b) if so, what were the major items on the agenda that were discussed; and

(c) what are the details thereof; including any recommendations made at this meeting which would have a bearing on any anti-tobacco proposals?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) Major items on the agenda were annual accounts & administrative reports and the new schemes to be implemented by the Board during 1994-95, all of which were approved. As regards the proposed legislation by the Ministry of Health restricting tobacco use and advertisement, the Board reiterated its earlier recommendation that the matter needed a thorough re-examination of the various aspects of the matter. The size of the next crop for Andhra Pradesh was also debated but no final view was taken.

Progress on recommendations of Tobacco Board meeting

1813. SHRI V. HANUMANTHA RAO: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to refer to answer to Unstarred Question 7371 given in the Rajya Sabha on the 13th June, 1994 and state:

(a) whether any significant progress has been made on any recommendations considered at the Tobacco Board meeting held in the month of May, 1994;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the steps proposed to implement the decisions of this meeting?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) to (c) The apprehensions expressed by the trade & industry with regard to the restrictive legislation have been taken note of by the Government. The views of the Tabacco Board have been conveyed to the Ministry of Health for due consideration. The overall decision will be taken so as to promote the larger public interest.

Scheme for retention of Tobacco Board Registration

1814. SHRI V. HANUMANTHA RAO: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is any scheme under Tobacco Board consideration to allow farmers to retain their Tobacco Board registartion if they do not cultivate tobacco for two consecutive years; and

(b) if so, what are the present rules of Tobacco Board which should be observed by tobacco farmers to maintain their registration?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) and (b) The registration of growers is made on the basis of the estimated crop size, the previous experience of the applicant in growing virginia tobacco, his track record in clearance of Tobacco Board dues and with the objective of giving priority to such growers who have invested heavily in infrastructure facilities like barns. In the current scenario, the possibility of registering growers who have discontinued cultivation is very unlikely.

Workers engaged in Tobacco Economy in Andhra Pradesh

1815. SHRI YERRA NARAYANASWAMY: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) the number of workers engaged in the tobacco economy in Andhra Pradesh as estimated by Tobacco Board;

(b) the sector-wise distribution of these workers differentiating them by the type of work in tobacco sector;

(c) whether Government have taken steps to protect their level of employment; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) and (b) The number of workers in the tobacco economy sector-wise in A.P. is estimated as under:—

	lakh
1. Production including grading at farm level	14.5
2. Handling operations by the buyers including regarding	0.4
3. Redrying/threshing operations	0.7
	15.0

(c) and (d) With the objective of protecting employment in this sector, Government through Tobacco Board is taking all possible steps to promote exports of tobacco and tobacco products.

Competition to Indian Tobacco Exports

1816. SHRI YERRA NARAYANASWAMY: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether India is facing competition from other tobacco growing countries for tobacco exports;

(b) if so, what are the names of countries which are fast becoming major competitors of Indian tobacco; and

(c) the steps being taken to protect the tobacco exports?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The major competitors of Indian tobacco are Brazil, Zimbabwe, China, Greece, Italy, Argentina, Philippines, Thailand, Indonesia, Malawi etc.

(c) Steps being taken to protect our tobacco exports include:

(i) Reorientation of production and developmental strategies to meet the challenge of the changing international scenario.

(ii) Enhancing quality and productivity levels of Indian tobacco so as to make it price competitive in international markets.

(iii) Expanding the base of quality tobacco in light soils by identification of suitable new areas.

(iv) Production of low tar and low Nicotine tobaccos.

(v) Elimination of unsuitable areas for tobacco cultivation.

(vi) Improving grading standards at firm level.

(vii) Provision of long term credit for export of tobacco.

(viii) Stengthening of existing markets and exploring new markets through sponsoring delegations, inviting delegations from abroad participation in international fairs and exhibitions.

(ix) Inclusion of tobacco in bilateral trade agreement.

(x) Encouraging Indian exporters to establish Indian own warehouses for stock and sale of tobacco and cigarettes in CIS countries.

(xi) Bringing in economy in curing costs and thus reduce the unit cost of production.

(xii) Allowing foreign investment in the areas of cigarette manufacturing mainly for export of cigarettes.

(xiii) Promoting 100 per cent EOUs for export of cigarettes.

Irregularities in export credit interest subsidy scheme, 1968

1817. SHRI AJIT P. K. JOGI:
SHRI RAM GOPAL YADAV:
Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Comptroller and Auditor General of India has pointed out some irregularities committed in the Export Credit (Interest Subsidy) Scheme, 1968;